DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 870 EA 013 799

AUTHOR Conners, Dennis A.
TITLE Power and the Polls: A Community Power Structure and Its Implications for a School Bond Referendum.
PUB DATE Feb 81
NOTE 28p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Los Angeles, CA, April 13-17, 1981). Some pages may reproduce poorly due to broken print of original document.

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Bond Issues: *Community Leaders: Community Study: Community Surveys: Elections: Elementary Secondary Education: Interviews: Observation: *Political Influences: Political Issues: Political Power: *Power Structure: Voting
IDENTIFIERS Referendums

ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to explore the power structure in a Southwestern community of 93,000 and to determine which elements in that power structure had the most influence in a local school bond referendum. The data for the study were collected using two techniques. First, a panel of knowledgeable community members identified 85 politically influential persons who were then interviewed. Second, a random sample of district voters was surveyed by telephone. The data collected were analyzed to clarify the social, political, and professional relationships among individuals identified as in the highest three tiers of the community's power structure. The study revealed this power structure to be a multi-group, noncompetitive system characterized by a high degree of consensus. This consensus on basic community policy, including educational philosophy, was passed down through the formal organizational networks of the school district and the chamber of commerce as well as through an informal social network. The campaign strategy for the bond referendum focused successfully on using these networks to mobilize only those voters primarily favorable to the district and its needs. (Author/PGD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDPS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED204870

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Power and the Polls: A Community Power Structure and Its Implications for a School Bond Referendum

Dennis A. Conners
Washington State University

Power and the Polls

February, 1981

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dennis A. Conners
College of Education
Washington State University
Pullman, Washington 99164

Research Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, California, April 1981.

EA 013 739

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
D A. Conners
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Abstract

One community's power structure and the implications it had for a $43 million school bond referendum is examined using ethnomethodology. The eleven month study describes and analyzes the political disposition, social interaction, and organizational interrelationships as well as the critical issues raised before and during the campaign. The power structure directly influenced the decision of the electroate by controlling access, information, and knowledge. Educational administrators are encouraged to develop strategies not just to cope but to influence decision-making within the power structure.

Introduction

Strong evidence of a "taxpayer revolt" was found by economic researchers for school bond referenda between the mid-1950's and the mid-1960's (Alexander and Bass, Note 1). However, their collective conclusion was not the same based upon data for the period of 1966 through 1972 even though referenda proposals predominately failed. Were school officials aware of their community's power structure and their preferences? Were educational administrators able to devise campaign strategies based upon sound knowledge of the community's influentials? This is the report of a study which explored the power structure in one community and described which segements seemed to have the most impact on the school district's $43 million bond referendum. The major research questions were: (a) What individuals and/or groups formed the power structure of the community encompassing the Alder School District*, and (b) how did the power structure function in relation to the bond referendum?

The purpose of the study reported here was to systematically identify the power structure in the Alder community. First, the influence structure was examined in terms of the actor's political disposition, the social structure among the various participants, and the political interrelationships of the actors in the political system of the community. Second, the impact of the power structure on the bond referendum was examined in terms of the issues raised before and during the bond campaign. These issues were examined from the standpoint of their saliency, criticalness, and controversiality within the political system. The description of the influence structure and issues had implications for analysis of: (a) the dynamics of behavior by community influentials, as well as others, and how that behavior affected the total

---

*Pseudonyms have been used throughout the study.

political system; (b) how bond referenda campaigns may be influenced through political activity; (c) the method of issue accommodation and conflict resolution; and (d) possible alternative strategies for conducting school bond referenda.

Basic Concepts of Power and Influence

The literature and research contributing to a clearer understanding of the problem posed in this study consists of information provided by scholars about power structures and influence within communities.

Early studies by sociologists, although not directed at educational decision-making, provided evidence of the existence and the nature of a community power structure. Spiess (1967) indicated that concern for power and influence relationships could be traced back to antiquity. Stratification studies, or the idea of probing the social class and power structure in American communities, began in the late 1920's and early 1930's. (See Lynd, 1929, 1937; Warner, 1941, 1944; Hollingshead, 1949). These studies were the direct antecedents to the type of reputational studies of community power pioneered by Hunter (1953).

Hunter's sociological theory viewed the community as a system of action in which power not only existed but consisted of social rather than physical action. Interpersonal relations were considered as most important. The most prominent opposition to Hunter's methodology and findings came from the ranks of those who advocated a pluralistic approach to the analysis of community power relationships.

Dahl (1961) concluded that power and influence tended to be specialized by issue with no single group wielding significant power or influence. To Dahl, political resources were available to most citizens, however, many did not choose to use them. The pluralists' model was accused of confusing multiple elites out of their dedication to the democratic ideology.

Clark (1968) offered a model for the type of power structure that consisted of multiple ruling elites. He argued that there were plural issue areas, but within each of these could be located an elitist, monolithic decision-making structure similar to that found by Hunter. Even though a given person may be at the top of a pyramid for one issue, he may drop to the bottom for other issues.

The concept of community is complex and often misused and misinterpreted. Loomis (1960) offered one perspective by indicating that a community of people existed when there was a sense of shared feelings, shared knowledge, and a common set of goals. Minar (1969) viewed a community as both empirically descriptive of a social structure and normatively toned. He conceptualized communities as expressing constituents' vague yearnings for a commonality of desire as well as communion with those who have a common fate. Hughes (1976) discussed the hypothesis that communities, organizations, or social movements could be viewed as moving along the sacred-secular continuum. Hughes characterized the sacred community as one which viewed the old ways as the best ways. The secular community could be thought of as readily accepting new ways with the traditional being labeled as hypocritical.

Lutz and Iannaccone (1969) distinguished three concepts when dealing with power in educational organizations. The first focused upon the capacity or potential for power. The second concept dealt with social power which they described as the relationship between two entities in which one is seen as producing an effect upon the other, and the last concept dealt with influence. McCleary (1976) examined power in the political sense and divided it into three elements: (a) power over someone; (b) power under particular conditions or in relation to particular affairs; and (c) power

with the capability of exercising sanctions. He went on to state that the "conceptualization of power as the form of influence most central to political activity [allows] one to define politics as the fashioning of coalitions of influence in an attempt to determine what values can be implemented" (McCleary; 7-8).

The analysis of community power structures, with educational institutions and educational leaders as major dimensions, has grown out of the historical disagreement between the reputationalists and the pluralists. The outgrowth of this disagreement was a call for a combination of these two approaches into the study of community power. Apling's (1970) study of the influence of the mayor of a large Midwestern city on educational decision-making is a good example of the combination approach. The study included the identification and analysis of specific controversial issues as well as the identification of influentials. Bloom (1963) studied two Iowa school districts and attempted to describe the power structure implicit in both communities. He also explored the communities' influence on public school issues.

Political participation is far from universal. A majority of school referenda decisions are made by a minority of the registered voters. In a study of over 2,500 bond and tax referenda held in 1,054 school districts throughout the U.S. between 1948 and 1959, the mean turnout was but 36.3 percent (Carter and Suttoff, 1960). Factors associated with a differential propensity among those who are registered to vote have been examined in numerous studies. In the most often cited, general voter tendencies were examined, but they were not restricted to referenda elections (see Campbell, et al., 1960). Two California based

studies regarding school referenda elections uncovered a number of significant factors which distinguished between districts with higher and lower voter turnouts. Results of the first indicated that suburban districts with a high proportion of young adults and owner-occupied homes tended to exhibit a lower voter turnout (Alexander and Bass, Note 1). The second, revealed that age, socio-economic status, and race ethnicity were associated with voter turnout (Ossman and Grubb, Note 4).

It was against this background of conceptualization that the study reported here was conducted between March, 1979 and January, 1980. During the first four months, the researcher performed in the role of an observer. During the next seven months the researcher took a more active role as participant-observer in the capacity of administrative assistant in the school district central office.

Study Methodology and Design

Research on this problem was conducted using an ethnographic approach. This approach was not unique to the field of educational administration. Each of several other studies (Bowles, 1956; McGivney, 1967; and Moser, 1973), particularly the suggestions of Bogen and Taylor (1975), served as precedents and contributed considerably to the overall design. Bogen and Taylor's comments on the important elements of observations--the participants, the setting, the purpose, the social behavior, and the frequency or duration of the occurrence--assisted in observation of both scope and sequence of the campaign strategy meetings, the open hearings, the board meetings, and the day-to-day interactions of actors.

Becker's (1961) advice on the necessity for continuous observation and the importance of observing the totality of the event had a bearing on observations within the district setting. The use of Homans' (1950) interaction concepts provided a basis for observation of the influence structure within the

community in terms of delineating the activities, beliefs, and interactions of individuals.

Research Site

The site selected for the study was the Alder community. Alder, a city of 93,000 residents, had been annexed in 1978 by a large, fast-growing Southwestern city. Prior to that annexation, the community's boundaries were coterminous with that of the school district. In addition to available cooperation and access and reasonable costs, this site was chosen for research purposes, because it was a manageable system in which a study of this nature had never been done before. Furthermore, the district and surrounding community, up until the annexation, had its own strong identity.

During the first sixty years of existence the Adler economy and sociological identity depended upon productive agriculture. A three story school building accommodated eleven grades for 30 years until 1940 when the population reached 150, and the town could boast having four stores and a new school. In the early 1960's commercial and residential development erupted in the area. Today, Adler is the recognized home of research and development facilities for several national firms that have attracted an influx of people. During the eight year period prior to 1979 the number of single family residences increased 262 percent to 11,902. Multi-family dwellings increased by 274 percent during the five-year period next preceding 1979. Over 3,600 housing starts were projected for 1980-1982. Although single family dwellings constituted nearly 41 percent of the new housing, there was a shift toward apartments and condominiums. Adler was a community experiencing rapid transition.

Growth in school enrollment paralleled population increases with an average annual increment of about 1,200 students. Enrollments increased from 600 in the mid-1960's to over 14,750 as of January, 1980.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews. Of the six data collection procedures used, the interviewing process provided the greatest source of substantive data. A total of 85 face-to-face interviews and 125 telephone interviews were completed.

Persons to be interviewed during the face-to-face segment of the investigation was determined according to a combination of Hunter's (1953) "reputational technique" and Dahl's (1961) "event analysis technique". Name listings of potential influentials were generated by persons considered to be at the center of community activities. A panel of four knowledgeables, consisting of the former superintendent of schools, the director of the chamber of commerce, a local business executive, and a clergyman, selected from the lists those persons whom they felt were most influential. As a cross check to this procedure, names of potential community influentials were determined by analyzing community decisions made over a five-year period. This was accomplished by identifying those who were most active in initiating and carrying out community projects. A sample of the general public was identified for telephone contact by drawing a systematic sample from voter registration lists. A sample size of 232 names--evenly distributed by those who voted in the referendum and those who did not--was considered sufficient to achieve a representative response.

The format for the first set of 65 interviews consisted of conducting in-depth interviews with listed prominent persons. Information was solicited about: (a) issues, problems, and decisions in Alder; (b) their participation in these issues; (c) the participation of other leaders; (d) friendship ties with other leaders; (e) business ties; (f) an estimate of relative influence of other leaders; and (g) information about power groups. During the course of the two hour interview other perceived influentials were added to the list of persons to be interviewed.

After the bond referendum, a second set of 20 interviews were conducted with those influentials who appeared to the researcher, to have been most active in the campaign. Topics covered in these hour long interviews centered around real or potential issues in the campaign as well the emergence of any leadership forces in the community.

The telephone survey, conducted over a ten day period immediately following the November 17, 1979 bond referendum, consisted of a limited number of focused, pre-coded questions designed to secure perceptions of the power structure from citizens who were not nominated by any panel of knowledgeables. Of the 232 total sample, 40 individual respondents (over 17 percent) no longer lived in the district. Another 42 (over 18 percent) were never contacted. Interviewers were instructed to call a minimum of four times. The refusal rate represented six percent of the total sample.

A research investigation of this magnitude posed problems in planning, contacting, and conducting the necessary interviews. Seven graduate students were selected and trained as face-to-face interviewers approximately one month before to the data gathering effort. Prior to the selection of each interviewer, the researcher met with each to assess interest, motivation, capability, and (insofar as was possible) integrity. Thirty high school seniors from a sociology class were trained as telephone interviewers two weeks prior to the telephone survey. The training sessions for both groups were held separately, but each group met for two sessions of three hours each.

Other Data Sources. Newspaper articles in three local newspapers were reviewed for a ten-year period, and they provided information for an analysis of the school and community political system. Taped verbatim minutes of all regular, special, and open meetings provided clarity and specificity. The researcher also attended all such meetings.

Personal papers and memoranda of various administrative staff and community residents specific to the bond referendum were examined, and these gave insight into both the community and administration. Observations by the researcher of community meetings, campaign strategy meetings, regularly scheduled school board meetings, special meetings, and everyday interaction of community members provided a unifying dimension to the formal interviews and statistics.

Data Retrieval and Analysis

Two data retrieval systems were developed to store the multitude of facts, opinions, statements, and accounts of community power. They allowed the researcher to access information on the actors, groups and organizations, the community, and the bond referendum. The first system used conceptual areas as the basis for a card index. The three areas were: (a) statements and accounts associated with first-level influentials; (b) statements and accounts reflecting data emerging from second- and third-level influentials; and (c) data emerging from other sources. Secondly, the telephone survey instrument was designed with the capability for easily transforming data into a machine readable format, so a computer could be utilized.

There were three analytic dimensions to this study. The first was an examination of the dynamics of behavior by community influentials and groups as they affected the political structure. The second reflected the influence of the political activity upon the outcome of the bond election. The third emphasized the process of issue accommodation and resolution. These three dimensions were analyzed by describing: (a) the political disposition of the participants; (b) the social structure of the actors; and (c) the issues raised before and during the course the bond campaign. This analytic framework of conceptualizations and statistical information served as a basis for organizing data from the various sources.

Categories of Public Influence

Three categories of sub-publics were delineated. The most appropriate categories for both individuals and groups were first, second, and third-level influentials. These sub-publics were described in terms of their means of identification, the role they played in the community, their base of influence, and their interrelationships within the community political system.

First-Level Influentials

A first-level influential was defined as any individual or group that had the ability to assert influence on other participants within the political system of the community. Influentials were designated as those individuals who received 50 percent or more nominations on either the interview schedule the telephone survey questionnaire, or both (see Table 1). Seven individuals fit the criteria for inclusion into the category of first level influential.

Table 1

Nominations of Individual First Level Influentials in the Alder Community

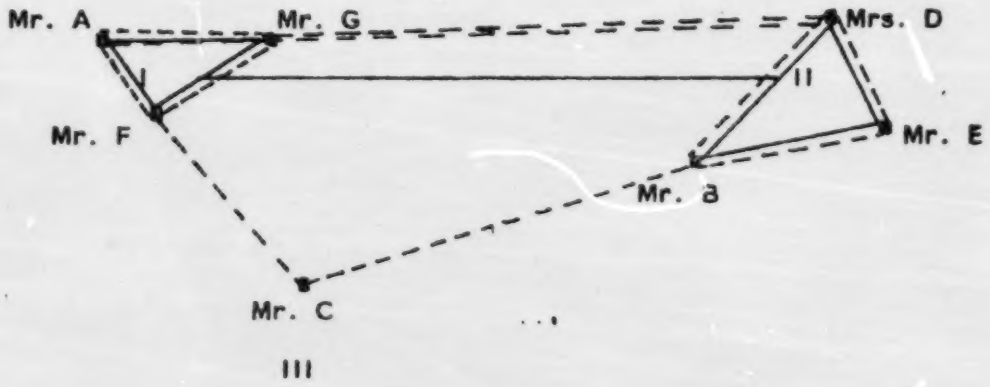
Name	Occupational Identification	Source of Nominations: Interview (a) N=85	Survey (a) N=125
Mr. A	Board Member	54 (63)	70 (56)
Mr. B	Business	30 (77)	04 (15)
Mr. C	Minister	43 (74)	33 (26)
Mrs. D	Chamber of Commerce Manager	46 (57)	40 (32)
Mr. E	City Councilman	44 (57)	86 (68)
Mr. F	Board Member	41 (63)	51 (41)
Mr. G	Superintendent	33 (39)	74 (59)

[a] Numbers in parenthesis indicate the percentage of nominations recieved.

The Alder Southwest Chamber of Commerce and the Alder School District were the two organizations which were identified as influential. Like the individual influentials, these organizations were those which received 50 percent or more nominations on either the interview schedule, the telephone questionnaire, or both.

An analysis of the social structure revealed the location of each individual within the sub-public according to group associations. The social and organizational interaction of the first level influential sub-public is depicted in Figure 1. The three dominant groups found on this level had as members Mr. A, Mr. G, and Mr. F of the school district (I), Mrs. D, Mr. B, and Mr. E of the Alder Southwest Chamber of Commerce (II), and Mr. C of the United Methodist Church.

Figure 1
Interaction in the First Level Influential Sub-public



KEY

Letters = Group Members

Numbers = Groups

---------- = Social Interaction

_____ = Organizational Interaction

Second-Level Influentials

A true picture of the bond referendum outcome is dependent, to a significant extent, upon the political disposition of the less influential segments of the community. A second-level influential was an individual or group receiving less than 50 percent, but more than one, nomination on the interview schedule, telephone questionnaire, or both. Table 2 summarizes the data collected delineating the second-level influentials in Alder.

Table 2

Nominations of Individual Second Level Influentials in the Alder Community

Name	Occupational Identification	Source of Information: Interview (a) N=65	Source of Information: Survey (a) N =125
Mrs. H	Publisher	25 (38)	10 (8)
Mr. I	Retiree	9 (14)	5 (4)
Mr. J	Executive	21 (32)	12 (9)
Mr. K	Board Member	23 (35)	7 (5)
Mrs. L	Board Member	15 (23)	4 (3)
Dr. M	Board Member	6 (5)	1 (.8)
Mr. N	Board Member	8 (12)	0 (0)
Mr. O	Retiree	10 (15)	0 (0)

[a] Numbers in parentheses indicate the percentage of nominations received.

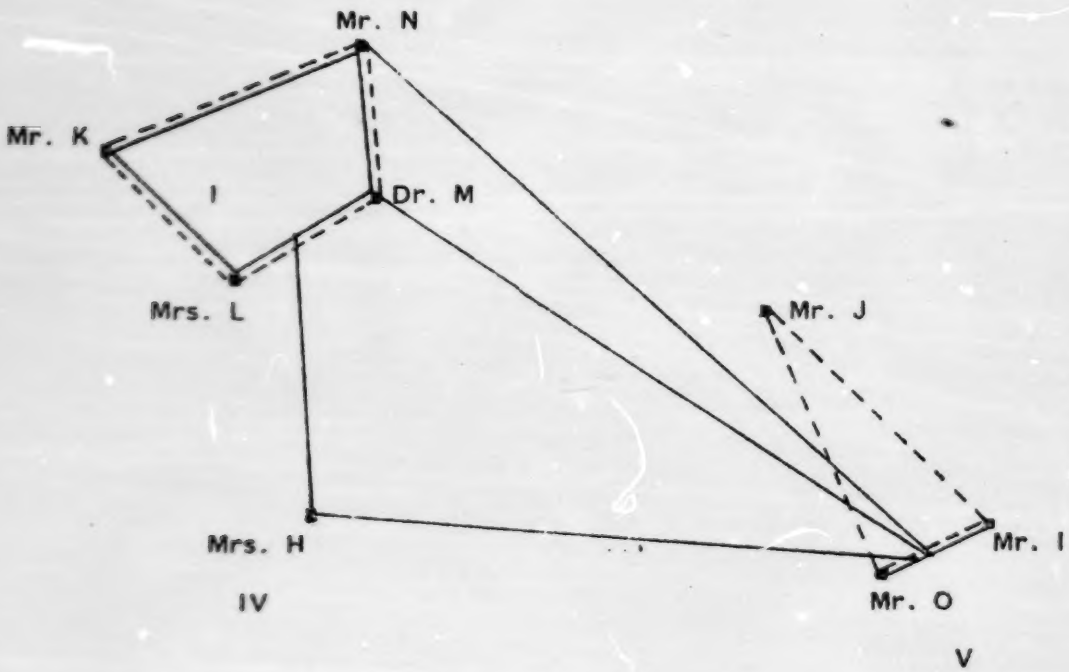
There were four groups nominated which, according to the established criteria, were labeled as second-level influentials. Approximately 41 percent of the interviewees viewed one of the newspapers as being influential in the

community. While a service club, the Jaycees, and the Community Improvement Association received 21, 12, and 3 percents respectively.

The second-level influential sub-group is represented in Figure 2. Again the Alder School District (I) is visible primarily due to the nominations of four school board members: Mr. K, Mrs. L, Dr. M, and Mr. N. This group has a direct link with the newspaper (IV) represented by its publisher Mrs. H. Group V is an area service club while the lone individual on this level is Mr. J, a wealthy real estate broker and investor.

Figure 2

Interaction in the Second Level Influential Sub-public



KEY

Letters = Group Members

Numbers = Groups

Social ---------- = Interaction

Organizational _____ = Interaction

Third-Level Influentials

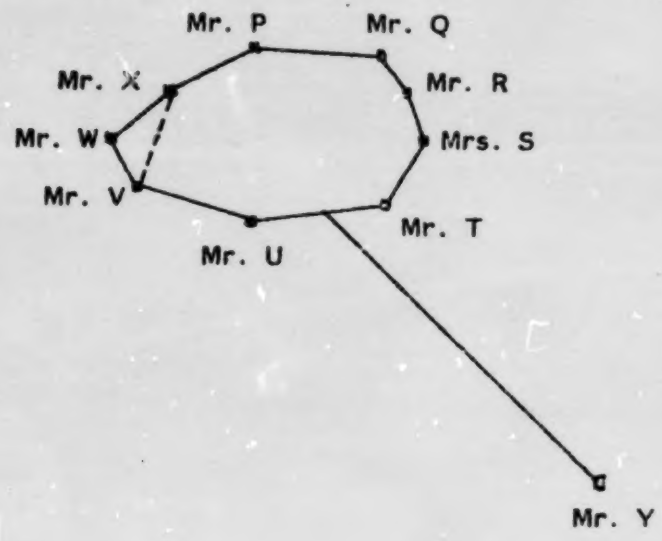
The analysis of all the forces impacting Alder's school bond referendum would be incomplete if there were no discussion of a third-level influential. The primary means of identification for these individuals and/or groups was through field notes and observations by the researcher throughout the entire time of the study. A third-level influential was defined as an individual or group observed as being active in the campaign, but receiving no nominations in the interview or community survey.

The following persons were viewed as third-level influentials: Mr. X, Assistant Superintendent for High Schools; Mr. W, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary and Middle Schools; Mr. V, Business Manager in the school district; Mrs. S, Public Information Officer in the district; Mr. U, Principal; Mr. P, Director of Special Services; Mr. T, a school board member; Mr. R, Director of Facilities Planning and Construction for the school district; and Mr. Y, a resident of Alder.

The final sub-public is the third-level influential represented in Figure 3. This level is comprised primarily of the administrative team members who served on the district's bond campaign committee. There was also one individual on this level who had an organizational link with the school district. Mr. Y, a disgruntled taxpayer, made futile attempts at organizing opposition to the bond referendum. This accounted for the direct link between himself and the school group.

Figure 3

Interaction in the Third Level Influential Sub-public



KEY

Letters = Group Members

Numbers = Groups

Social ---------- = Interaction

Organizational _____ = Interaction

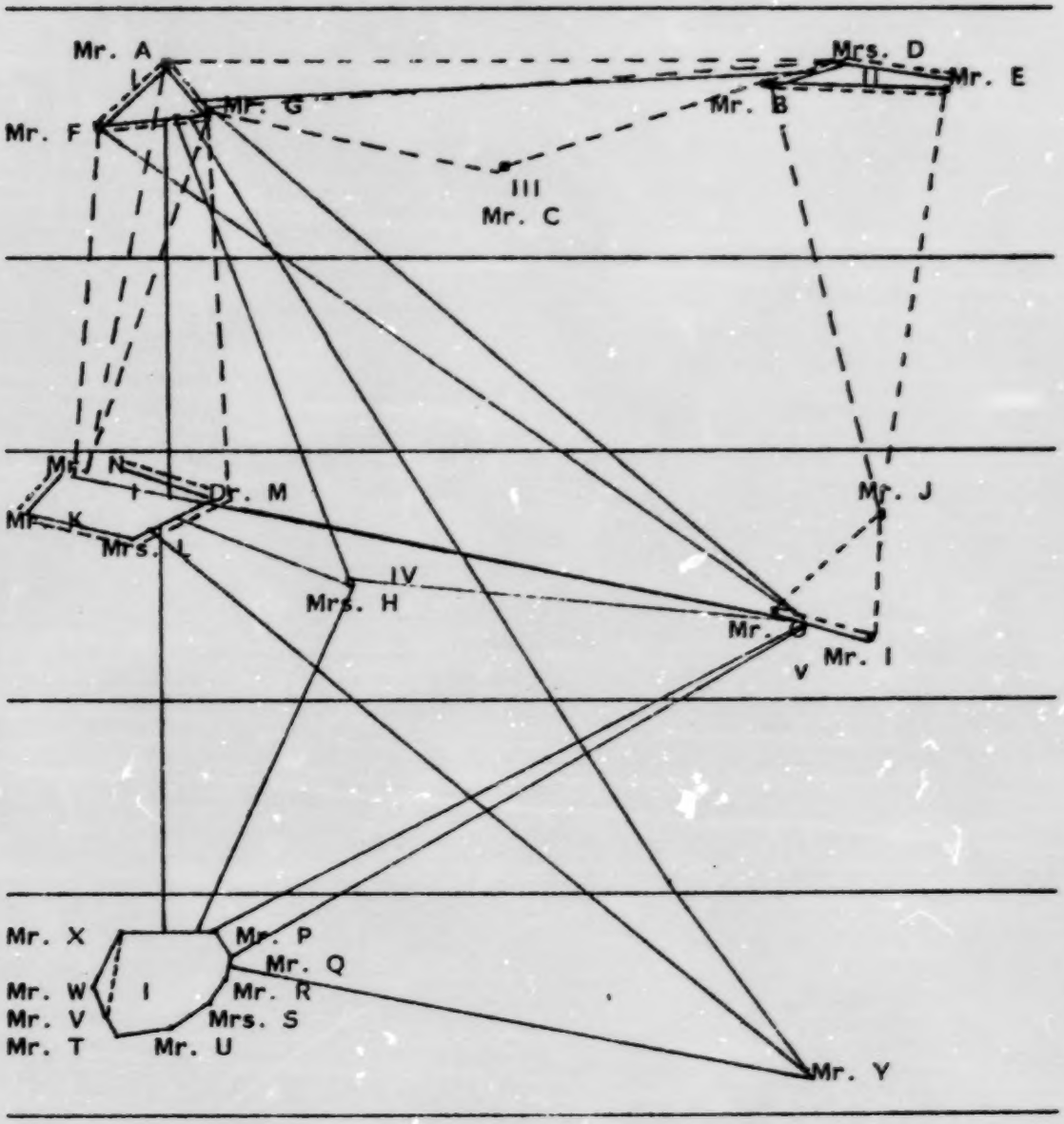
Interaction of Influentials

The exploratory design of the study and the ethnographic methodology resulted in an abundance of data about the power structure. The data provided a basis for an analysis of the effects of the power structure on the outcome of the school bond referendum. Linkages between the three levels of influence increased when the sub-publics were considered in totality. Figure 4 details the social and organizational relationships among all twenty-five individuals and affiliated groups in the community.

Figure 4

Social and Organizational Interaction Across

Three Sub-publics in Alder



KEY

Letters = Group Members

Numbers = Groups

----------Social Interaction

_____Organizational Interaction

Group I depicts the Alder School District and is represented on all three levels as indicated by the organizational lines. Social interaction is evidenced between school board members Mr. A and Mr. F and other board members on the second level. The superintendent of schools displayed organizational and social linkages with his administrative team members. The Alder Southwest Chamber of Commerce (II), while recognized as a first-level influential organization, displayed numerous social linkages with various individuals and groups on all levels. The United Methodist Church (III) can be characterized in the same manner. By virtue of its function, the newspaper (IV) had considerable organizational interaction with various segments of the community. Similarly, the area service club (V) drew members from all levels.

The final segment of the social structure to be considered consisted of one individual--Mr. Y. His link with other segments of the society stemmed from his objections to the planned referendum. While he had formal interaction with the school district, he had no social interaction with any individual or group in any of the three sub-publics.

It is apparent from Figure 4 that there existed strong organizational and social interaction between the school district, the chamber of commerce, and other individuals and groups. The catalyst for much of this interaction stemmed from critical issues raised prior to and during the Alder referendum. Four significant issues had consequences for the development of the community. Each had an effect on the quality of the relationship between the school district and the community and each highlighted the impact of the power structure in Alder.

Critical Issues Concerning the Referendum

The first issue dealt with the neighboring Southwestern city's plans to annex certain sections of Alder in December of 1977. The Alder Southwest Chamber of Commerce was instrumental in providing organizational and financial resources to combat the "checkerboard" annexation. Community influentials failed to convince the city council to annex the entire area rather than follow a piecemeal approach. This issue proved important in that it was the first time civic interest had been aroused enough to produce action. It also showed the relative strength of the Alder Southwest Chamber of Commerce.

The second issue involved the U.S. Justice Department's ruling that the city, because of recent annexation, had diluted minority voting strength in violation of the Voting Rights Act. The city was instructed to change from a five-member to a nine-member district plan. The Alder Southwest Chamber of Commerce and school district collaborated on a plan to provide input to municipal planners to accomplish two objectives. The first was to retain school district and economic boundaries within one council district. The second set the stage for the successful election of the community's Mr. E to a newly redistricted city council seat. These significant political issues identified both the school district and chamber of commerce as the two most actively influential groups in the community. The issues also demonstrated that certain community members did have political resources which could be used to effect change.

During the course of the Alder referendum campaign, two issues had the potential to cause conflict and have a divisive effect upon the community. The first was the controversy over inclusion of an auditorium among the facilities needed by the school district. The proposed 2,000 seat auditorium

would cost approximately six million dollars to construct. Arguments occurred between board members about the size and cost of a facility of limited educational use. The issue was resolved in the form of motion passed at a board meeting changing the terminology from auditorium to large group multi-purpose facility and leaving the facility as part of the referendum while asking the administration for a feasibility study. Throughout the campaign few citizens raised any questions regarding the use of the facility.

The final critical issue concerned one Alder citizen's accusation that the tax practices were discriminatory. Mr. Y, an urban city tax assessor, questioned the methods by which Alder assessed its local airport. For years, improvements on that property were recorded on the tax roles as having no value. The tax office annually deducted $1.4 million from the assessment on the assumption that this was what it would take to clear the land in order to make it suitable for home developments. Mr. Y petitioned the Board of Equalization to have his personal property assessed in the same manner. The board unanimously vetoed his petition. He fought a one-man losing battle to bring the tax issue to the public and defeat the referendum.

These four issues were critical only to the extent that they had the potential to create conflict within the community's political system. The annexation and redistricting brought to the forefront two organizations which turned serious problems into opportunities. The auditorium and taxation issues were resolved discretely and quietly in order that the referendum would pass.

Summary

This exploratory study investigated one community's power structure and the implications the nature of that structure had for a $43 million schoo

bond referendum. Utilizing an ethnographic methodology employing an extensive interviewing process and telephone survey, the individuals and groups forming the power structure were identified and the campaign chronicled.

The findings of this study characterized Alder's power structure as a multi-group , noncompetitive structure as described by Nunnery and Kimbrough (1971). Seven individuals were identified as first-level influentials. The school district and chamber of commerce were perceived as two powerful organizations which provided the community with an identity and a basis for political governance. A sub-public of eight individuals and four organizations comprised of second-level power group while the third-level was made up of school administrators and one community resident.

Issues analyzed in this study had the potential for considerable conflict. However, as the community wide political issues of annexation and redistricting demonstrated, the locus of accommodation occurred exclusively among influentials on the first-level. The same method of accommodation took place with regard to the auditorium and tax issues raised during the school bond referendum.

The methodology of combining the reputational and decision analysis techniques was used to overcome the arguments of stratificationists and pluralists. However, the results in Alder tended to confirm Hunter's findings that a few influentials dictated the major policies of the community. These individuals were in positions of leadership in the visable organizations and restricted any dysfunctional conflicts to mere procedural questions. The manner in which the campaign was carried out emphasized a monopolistic type structure. Mobilization of a very small positive segment of the political system turned out the required number of voters to pass the referendum. The campaign was successful with 781 voting in favor and 58 voting against the referendum. This was a turnout of approximately two percent of registered voters.

Conclusions and Recommendations

School administrators, in an effort to increase local district revenues, have shown increased awareness that public education is a political process. The major findings of the study identified the Alder community's power structure as a multi-group, noncompetitive system characterized by a high degree of consensus. Because of the frequent organizational and social interaction of individuals, especially across levels, the conclusion was drawn that there existed in Alder a high degree of consensus. This consensus on basic community policy regarding city council representation, taxation, school philosophy, and facilities was passed down through the formal organizational network established by the school district and chamber of commenrce as well as the informal social network. The campaign strategy focused on mobilizing only a limited segment of the community. These voters were those primarily favorable to the school district and its needs.

This research was oriented primarily toward a description of the political dynamics of influentials within the community. Future research should concentrate upon district level units as well as the voter behavior of selected subgroups within that unit. Identifying, describing, and analyzing various campaign strategies and the influence on voter turnout and response could lead to a clearer understanding of politics of influence on referenda.

Policy implications emanating from the research have consequences for educational administrators. The research agrees with Nunnery and Kimbrough's (1971) point that political activity on the part of school officials is vital. Political power must be ethically cultivated and coordinated to promote quality school programs. Educators must be aware of diverse political systems and the realities of tailoring appropriate political strategies to fit the system.

Implications of this research point to the fact that economic decisions on the local level are influenced, not so much by the general characteristics of the community, but by those who participate in the political process. The power structure influences the decisions of the electorate by controlling access, information, and knowledge. Educational administrators need to develop strategies not just to cope but to influence decision-making within the power structure.

Reference Notes

1. Alexander, A. J., and Bass, G. V. Schools, tax, and voter behavior: An analysis of school district property tax elections. Santa Monica: Rand, 1974.

2. Carter, R. F., and Savitoff, J. Communities and their schools. Stanford: Institue for Communication Research, 1960.

3. Nemec, H. Personal communication, 1985.

4. Ossman, J. W., and Grubb, N. W. Adjustments from disequilibrium in local finance: School referenda in California. Childhood and Government Project, University of California, Berkeley, 1978 (mimeo).

5. Palmer, J. C. (Ed.), Alder school district long range planning report. February, 1980.

References

Apling, D. L. An analysis of a large city mayor's influence with regard to educational decision-making. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Toledo, 1970.

Becker, H. S. Boy in white. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Blome, A. A study of the identification of community power structure, and influence on public school issues. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Iowa, 1963.

Bogdan, R. and Taylor, S. J. An introduction to qualitative research methods: A Phenominological approach to the social sciences. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975.

Bowles, B. D. Educational pressure groups and the legislative process in California, 1945-1966. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1966.

Campbell, A., Converse, P. E. Miller, W. E. and Stokes D. E. The American voter. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960.

Clark, T. N. Community structure and decision-making: Comparative analyses. San Francisco: Chandler, 1968.

Dahl, R. A. Who governs? New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1961.

Hollingshead, A. B. Elmstown youth. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 1949.

Homans, G. C. The human group. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1950.

Hughes, L. W. Informal and formal community forces: External influences on schools and teachers. Morristown, New Jersey: General Learning Press, 1975.

Hunter, F. Community power structures. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina, 1953.

Loomis, C. Social systems: Essays on their perspectives. Princeton: D. Von Norstrand & Co., 1960.

Lutz, F. W. and Iannaccone, L. Understanding educational organizations: A four study approach. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1969.

Lynd, R. and Lynd, H. Middletown. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1929.

_____. Middletown in transition. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1937.

McCleary, L. L. Politics and power in education. Morristown, New Jersey: General Learning Press, 1976, 7-8.

McGivney, J. Politics of vocational education in Wisconsin, 1909-1967. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1967.

Miner, D. The concept of community. New York: Aldine Publishing Co., 1969.

Moser, R. H. The politics of school community relations: A Puerto Rican community. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Wisconsin, 1973.

Nunnery, M. Y. and Kimbrough, R. B. Politics, power, polls, and school elections. Berkeley: McCutchen Publishing Co., 1971.

Stuess, J. Community power and influence studies. Two positions. Toledo: University of Toledo, 1970.

Warner, W. L. and Lunt, P. L. The social life of a modern community. (Vol. 1) New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941.

Warner, W. L. Havinghurst, R. J., and Loeb, M. Who shall be educated? New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944.